

CPNO Bylaws Committee Update Report

By Donna Palmer

In a healthy democratic society, laws are not written in stone. As our community continues to evolve and grow, it's important to make sure our Candler Park Neighborhood Organization's bylaws are fair and equitable and meet the needs of today's busy families. With that goal in mind, the CPNO board called for volunteers to form a committee to review our bylaws and propose changes that members can approve or reject.

Our first Bylaws Committee meeting was held in early September. From there, the Committee developed a short survey to take the pulse of the neighborhood. Using the results of that survey we have prepared a few proposals — two of which are outlined below:

Voting Outside Regular Meeting Times

The first major proposal has to do with allowing eligible members to vote on substantive issues outside the regular monthly meeting times. This topic received a whopping 80% support from the folks who took the survey.

The Committee kicked around several ideas including voting by proxy, early voting, or extending the voting time. After much debate, we propose that for substantive matters, a two-day window remain open for eligible members to let their voices be heard.

In other words, when there is a major issue up for a vote, eligible members will have 48 hours after the monthly CPNO meeting to record their individual votes. We propose that all voting of this nature be done electronically through the CPNO website. If someone is unable to vote in this manner, they can contact the Membership Officer within the 48-hour timeframe to record their vote.

Bear in mind that this extended voting is only for matters that require prior notice such as changes in zoning, any expenditure over \$500, capital expenditures of over \$25,000 or changes to the bylaws (you can find a complete list in Article VI, under Section 5 "Previous Notice of Motions" of the current bylaws). Routine housekeeping votes during the meetings can still be done by a show of hands either in person or on Zoom.

If there are extenuating circumstances, we propose that the board can shorten the window at its discretion. For instance, suppose a particular zoning issue must be reported to another entity within a specific timeframe that falls within the 48-hour window, under these circumstances the board could reduce the voting period to one day with proper notification to the membership.

Same-Day Registration to Vote

You may have noticed that we identify only eligible members for the voting process. Anyone who is 18 or older and either lives in Candler Park or owns property here can apply for membership free of charge. This includes people who rent as well as those who own their

homes. (Folks who own a business in our neighborhood can also appoint a representative as a voting member.)

Up until now, new members must join by the first day of the month to vote at that month's meeting. Previous members remain eligible to vote through April 30 of the next year, but if they miss the renewal deadline then they too need to renew by the first day of the month in order to vote. This brings us to the second major proposal: same-day registration for membership.

In our survey, the respondents provided mixed messages. 56% favored "same-day registration," yet only 47% favored that we "decrease the waiting period before voting." We interpret these responses as representing a substantial division in the neighborhood about whether people should be able to register to vote the day-of or if they should have to plan weeks ahead.

The Committee proposes that membership applications be accepted up to midnight on the day of the monthly meeting. In other words, if you've forgotten to re-up your membership but want to vote on a big issue, under this proposal you could register or re-register by midnight and then vote for or against the issue.

Allowing members to register the same day as the monthly membership meeting ensures that neighbors who show up to a meeting ready and eager to vote on an issue will not be told, "Sorry, you didn't register weeks ahead of time so you don't get a say."

This issue even affects our neighbors who have been part of the community for years if they forget in the course of their busy lives to renew their registration before April 30 each year, as CPNO requires. Our survey showed that for those opposed to this change, the most common concern was some variation that it would allow uninformed people to vote.

In proposing this change, the Committee concluded that removing this administrative obstacle outweighed the potential drawbacks, but we recognize there is division on this point among the membership and look forward to a robust conversation.

Our proposed bylaws changes were presented to the Board at their meeting on Nov. 13 and to the CPNO members on Nov. 20. We now plan to present them to the members for a vote at the monthly meeting on Feb. 19, which allows time for questions and discussion.

If you have any comments, please email the committee at: bylaws@candlerpark.org.

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